

## ***Hello Needham Families!***

We hope you are all staying active and healthy during this break from school. Are you looking for some ways to work on Occupational and Physical Therapy related skills at home? Peruse the following pages for lots of ideas for keeping your student/s busy, entertained and practicing useful skills. There's a lot of information here, so take it a little at a time. See what might work and be fun for your family. These are just suggestions...it's totally up to you what you might like to try. Feel free to share your favorites with us!

Keep in mind that a lot of children's play activities naturally incorporate many of these skills – movement, gross motor, fine motor, visual motor and strengthening. There are even activities/chores around the house that you can use to build skills – cooking, cleaning, folding laundry. Now is a perfect opportunity to give your child extra time to practice their daily self-help skills and become more independent in their morning routine such as getting dressed and brushing their teeth. Here is a link to an alternate way to tie shoelaces: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_DiF3IFzOeM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DiF3IFzOeM) Now is a great time to practice--it feels like there's NEVER enough time to practice in the morning when you are trying to get out the door!!

Helpful tips and strategies: Many skills are incorporated through natural learning opportunities. Your child will be motivated to engage in tasks that are meaningful. Preschool families may keep in mind that breaking down tasks into smaller steps is helpful when your child is learning a skill such as putting on a coat. Activities such as coloring, drawing, painting, puzzles, and connecting Legos are more fun when a child works with and takes turns with a parent, caretaker and sibling.

There are also a lot of toys and games that you may already have that can help to build skills. These days the more of these that you can bring outside the better – getting some fresh air while building skills will go a long way to staying healthy and keeping from going stir-crazy during this break!

**Toys/Games for building skill:** Here is a great list compiled by South Shore Therapies. You probably already own some of these.

[https://www.southshoretherapies.com/media/site\\_assets/cd9d31deccfbd53420c5709e70f96cf6/assets/toy\\_list\\_2019\\_ot.pdf](https://www.southshoretherapies.com/media/site_assets/cd9d31deccfbd53420c5709e70f96cf6/assets/toy_list_2019_ot.pdf)

## **Hand/Finger Strengthening Activities:**

All of the work your student completes at school requires them to have appropriate hand and finger strength. Here are some ideas to try at home.

1. Many kitchen/cooking activities are excellent choices for increasing hand strength. Have your child help you roll dough with a rolling pin, stir cookie dough, pudding, or cake batter, or cut, slice and bake cookies.

2. Have your child make confetti using a hand-held one-hole punch. The difficulty level of this activity can be increased or decreased by varying the weights of the paper your child is punching holes in. This confetti can then be used for fine motor activities.
3. Theraputty, bakers clay, play dough, and silly putty provide excellent opportunities to strengthen hands and fingers. You can have your child roll these items into snakes, balls, or flatten them. You can also hide items in these substances (buttons, beads, coins) and ask your child to pull apart the putty/clay to find them. Theraputty can be purchased at many home medical supply stores or through websites such as [www.therapro.com](http://www.therapro.com) . Here's a link for making a homemade playdough: <https://www.iheartnaptime.net/play-dough-recipe/>  
  
And a link for homemade baker's clay: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/11125/bakers-clay/>
4. Any toys that push and pull apart (Legos, Duplo blocks) are good for increasing hand and finger strength. Here is a video with 50 Lego/Duplo activities that you might find super fun to do with your kids if you have Lego/Duplo blocks kicking around the house: <https://www.facebook.com/LEGO/videos/vb.6665038402/2488582201358828/?type=2&theater>
5. Activities on a vertical surface at the child's shoulder level: i.e. tape paper to wall or refrigerator door, or use an art easel: set your child up to draw, color, do dot-to-dots, mazes, tracing, or write letters of the alphabet (play game "hangman"), play tic tac toe. Another fun activity is to stretch a piece of packing tape across a door frame at a height your child can just reach when they stand on tip toes--then have your child reach up and stick little balloons or other light-weight objects on the tape one at a time.
6. Household activities: squeeze spray bottle to water plants, wash windows, or play as a game in the tub; wring out sponges after cleaning dinner table or wring out washcloth when washing face or bathing; tear or cut the envelopes in half for recycling, crunch up paper, pop the bubble-packaging wrap with hands, screw/unscrew lids off of jars and various sized containers (toothpaste, shampoo, jelly jar).
7. Mix up your child's position when doing some of the activities, i.e. standing or sitting down; also lying on floor on stomach and resting on elbows is an alternate position to strengthen shoulder/arm/hand while playing a board game, reading a book, or doing a puzzle, etc.
8. Make a bird feeder. Here is a link to a video that can help. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLqRaensWNQ>

## **Fine Motor Activities:**

Fine motor skills are important for all aspects of school and daily life. Here's some to try at home.

1. There are many games that are available at toy stores that require the use of fine motor skills. A few examples of these would be "Operation", "Don't Spill The Beans", "Lite-Brite", and "Perfection".

Other games include “Battleship”, “Bed Bugs”, and Pick-up-sticks. Any other games that require movement of small pieces or the manipulation of small pegs would also serve the same purpose.

2. Have your child build with snap together toys such as Legos.
3. Have your child craft some jewelry or decorations by stringing popcorn, beads, macaroni, or buttons.
4. Have your child use mini marshmallows and toothpicks to form letters.
5. Hide small objects (beads, pegs, coins) in putty or play dough and have your child find them and pull them out.
6. Activities to promote functional grasp of crayon: thick/short crayons, eye dropper, spray bottles, tear paper, crumple tissue paper, stamps, stickers, clothes pins, tongs, tweezers, Lite Brite, pegs, bubble wrap, place pennies into slot or push into dough.
7. Activities to improve awareness of hands: paint on easel using fingers, sponges, paint brushes. Draw with chalk on a chalkboard or sidewalk; color over templates; play dough; sensory bins such as rice/beans/sand - hide items in the bin and have your child find them.
8. Here are a number of sensory motor books with a variety of activities to keep your kids busy, provided by Robyn Chu, MOT, OTR/L, Owner and Director of Growing Healthy Children Therapy Services, Inc., 3498 Green Valley Rd., Rescue, CA 95672, [www.GHCOT.com](http://www.GHCOT.com) Take a look--there might be a few activities in each book that would be just right for your child.

1) Apples Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/6q8zv9xs8iv75zr/Apples%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

2) Bugs and Butterflies Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/80u6f4nqcpnifhg/Bugs%20%26%20Butterflies%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

3) Dogs Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/j9rt3jjxojuibpy/Dogs%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

4) Gardening Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/77r7mh5tk2j9c98/Gardening%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

5) Pumpkins Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/mfgmc33cuoigih5/Pumpkins%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

6) Summer Fun Sensory Motor Activity Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/i3gdocju6kphlal/Summer%20Fun%20Sensory%20Motor%20Activity%20Book.pdf?dl=0>

## Visual Motor Control Skills:

1. Mazes are a great way to work on visual motor control. They come in all shapes, sizes, and degrees of difficulty. You can even design your own on paper, a white board or the driveway. Shorter ones with wider pathways are easier than long ones with very narrow pathways. Encourage your child to try not to touch the lines while they are working. Also encourage them to complete the maze with 1

smooth line rather than starting and stopping. This encourages greater control. There are a few mazes in the sensory motor books listed above.

2. Dot-to-dots are another activity that requires visual motor control in order for the planned picture to look right. Children should be encouraged to complete these slowly and accurately. You can find lots of printable dot-to-dot pages online.
3. Tracing activities are a great way to work on visual motor control. You can have your child trace pictures from one paper to another, trace various shapes or templates/stencils, or even trace letters you have already written with a pencil or a highlighter (remember to start at the top!). You can also do shadow tracing: place a piece of paper on the table; put a flashlight at the edge of the paper and put a small toy in front of the flashlight; trace the shadow it makes; create a picture from the outline if you want to!
4. Coloring activities (coloring books, color by # pages, paint by # pages) are a fun way to address motor control. You can change the degree of difficulty by changing the size of the space that is to be colored (smaller spaces are more difficult). These activities can be completed at a table or on an upright surface (taped to a wall or the refrigerator, on a bulletin board etc.)
5. Puzzles are great! If your child is new to them, put the majority of the puzzle together and then have your child help with the last few pieces. Point out edges and corners, see if they can identify which is which. Talk about the picture, the colors, the shapes. Can they guess which one fits if given a choice of two? Can they guess what a particular piece will look like? Lots of possibilities - try to avoid trial and error when possible.
6. There are many activities that can be completed to address cutting skills. Varying the weight or texture of the material that is being cut can change the degree of difficulty of the task. Thicker paper (i.e. cardboard) requires more strength, while delicate paper (i.e. tissue paper) can require more control. Straight lines are easier to cut than curved lines, which are easier than lines that change directions many times. Bigger pictures are easier to cut out than smaller ones. Suggested materials to cut would be standard weight paper, felt, cardboard, tissue paper, thin foam, sand paper, or fabric. If you are a coupon cutter, you could have your child help cut coupons (perhaps for things you will not use, if your child is still working on accuracy!). Make playdoh snakes and cut them into pieces. Cut straws and string them to make a necklace.
7. Please note the correct posture for cutting activities: position thumb toward ceiling, scissor blades pointing away from the body, keep elbow relaxed and close to body. Turn paper, not scissors. Activities to promote using scissors for preschool families: child size scissors, snip cards and strips of paper, provide physical guidance. You can also sing this song to the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle":  
Open, shut. Open, shut. That's the way we cut, cut, cut. Fingers on the bottom, thumb on top, please don't let the paper drop! Open, shut. Open, shut. That's the way we cut, cut, cut.

## Handwriting Skills:

These are skills that most of your students are working on in their OT sessions. Here's some ideas that may make it more fun to work on.

1. Having your child practice writing isolated letters and numbers is a good way to improve their letter and number formation skills. When children are writing printed letters or numbers, they should always start them at the top and work down. When using cursive, the letters should always start on the writing line. It is very important that a child has supervised practice of letter formations if this is an area of difficulty for them. If they are not supervised while practicing, they may continue to form them incorrectly, thereby reinforcing a bad habit.  
There are many creative multisensory ways to practice the formation of the letters of the alphabet:
  - a. You can use pencils, markers, crayons, sidewalk chalk, finger paints or paint with brushes.
  - b. You can have your child practice making the letters in shaving cream, sand or rice that is spread on a table or jelly roll tray.
  - c. Letters can be formed with putty, clay, playdough, or cookie dough by rolling out the dough/putty, breaking it into smaller pieces, and then putting the pieces together to form letters.
  - d. Letters can be formed out of french fries, pipe cleaners, toothpicks, popsicle sticks or straws.
  - e. While your child is in the bathtub you can have them write letters on the walls of the shower/tiles with shaving cream, soap, or soap paint.
  - f. Children can write letters with tubes of cake decorating icing.
  - g. Play games that include letter writing including, Hangman, tic tac toe using various letters of the alphabet.
  - h. Make numbers and letters on each other's back and try to identify them. Encourage your child to start at the top.
2. Handwriting without Tears is a good resource for writing letters and numbers. Here is a link to their parent resource page which includes some free downloads and a worksheet maker.  
[https://www.lwtears.com/resources-families-2019?pc=2019\\_footer\\_link](https://www.lwtears.com/resources-families-2019?pc=2019_footer_link)
3. There are many games that involve the use/writing of letters/words. These include boggle, boggle junior, hangman, and madlibs. Crosswords are also a good way to address both formation and sizing of letters. You can also create your own game by putting letters on a die, having your child roll it and then write that letter or a word that starts with that letter.
4. Write a list of plans for the day/at the end of the day write a few sentences about the best part of the day
5. Go old school and write a letter. No need to mail it, you could always write to a neighbor and deliver it to their mailbox yourself.
6. Get outside and use sidewalk chalk - see how big/small you can write the letters, write names, sight words, full sentences.

Tips for Pre-Printing Skills and Pre-Drawing Skills for Preschool Families: simple mazes, simple dot to dots, practice drawing shapes and lines in tray filled with salt, sand, rice, flour, foam  
Sit next to the child, model, take turns, break into smaller steps, sing songs for letter formation, rainbow writing-use different color crayons to trace letters, start with simple letters such as H, T, O, C. Letters with diagonal lines are more complex such as K and R.

Additionally there are many online resources for great therapy activities – simple Pinterest searches provide a ton of activity ideas for home.

## Keyboarding Practice and iPad Resources:

1. Practice keyboarding by typing a favorite poem, send an email to a family member or friend, keep a journal in Google docs and type entries during the time away from school
2. Voice typing practice through Google Docs (for example: keep a daily diary, voice type a letter to family members or friends, etc.)
3. Typing programs may include: Typing Pal: is accessible through the school website under technology.
  - a. <https://www.typing.com/student/games>,
  - b. <https://www.kidztype.com/> Dance Mat Typing,
  - c. <https://www.freetypinggame.net/>
4. iPad Apps: There are many iPad apps that are great for developing motor control skills, handwriting skills and visual perceptual skills. Encourage use of stylus while playing educational iPad games. Some apps that help kids practice OT skills are: Connect the Dots, Draw and Tell HD, Writing Wizard, Puzzingo, iDoodle, OR there are many other great educational Apps for coloring, connect the dots, mazes puzzles, letter and number writing practice.

## Sensory:

1. Activities that involve running, jumping, crawling, swinging, climbing
2. Here is a link to Go Noodle for indoor movement activities that are fun and easy to follow. <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
3. Indoor activities could include; wheelbarrow walks, crab walks, frog jumps, wall or table push ups.
4. Zen Den on Youtube is a great way to incorporate some Yoga, deep breathing, relaxation and mindfulness. Here is a link to get you started. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJ9zpRAlul>
5. Sensory play with shaving cream, play-doh, slime, moon sand, bin of rice or beans, tray of salt, flour.

6. Roll your child up like a “hot dog” with a blanket or in a bean bag chair.
7. Here is a list of activities that can provide Oral Sensory input in fun ways; blowing bubbles from a bubble wand, blowing up a balloon, taking a straw and blowing through it to push a cotton ball to have a ‘race’, playing a kazoo, harmonica if you have one.
8. Make an obstacle course out of your living room! Crawl behind the couch, under and over cushions, under and around chairs...whatever you can think of! Hide puzzle pieces and have your child find the pieces along the way and then put the puzzle together!

## **Gross Motor Movement Activities:**

It is beneficial for all children to get some movement every day! Here are a few simple ways to build movement and activity into daily activities at home with your child.

### Go Noodle:

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>

A free website that includes many movement and mindfulness videos for children of all ages. There is a wide variety of types/lengths of songs. A kid favorite is Koo Koo Kangaroo!

Exercise Buddy: <http://www.exercisebuddy.com/>

- This app is perfect for a workout routine for all students
- It provides social narratives, visual supports, video modeling, technology aided- instruction, and over course a fantastic exercise routine.

### Yoga activities:

- Cosmic Kids Yoga: <https://www.cosmickids.com/>
- Kids Yoga Stories: <https://www.kidsyogastories.com/>
- Practice common poses: Down dog, superman, boat pose, tree pose, child’s pose, bridge pose

### Outside suggestions:

- Go for a walk or hike
- Perform locomotor skills: practice running, galloping, skipping, hopping, leaping
- Ride a bike or scooter
- Jump Rope (traditional jump rope, jumping over the rope on the ground), jumping jacks
- Make a hopscotch path outside
- Make shape designs with chalk - line for a balance beam, shapes to jump in and out, lines to hop over, lily pads to jump between
- Play catch with a ball, play soccer/kick a ball

- Build an obstacle course (moving around objects, jumping over objects, stepping over objects)
- Dribble a basketball ball: with one hand, alternate hands, between the legs

Inside suggestions:

- Practice throwing (throw socks into a laundry basket) and catching
- Practice standing on one foot, practice standing on uneven surfaces (pillows)
- Jumping jacks, push ups, sit ups
- Animal walks: Bear walk, frog jumps, bunny hops, fly like a bird, crab walk, wheelbarrow walking (can also be done outside!)
- Blow up a balloon and try to keep it in the air
- Have a dance off between family members

Movement and music: Songs can be a fun way to incorporate movement into daily activity!

- Freeze Dance, Red light, green light, Shake your sillies out
- Going on a Bear Hunt (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wzlcu6tbEko&feature=youtu.be>)

Family play:

- The Youtube channel [That YouTub3 Family - The Adventurers](#), has tons of different activities, the whole family can enjoy!